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Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology

Self-Categorization Theory

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Self-Categorization Theory

Abstract

The focus of this chapter is self-categorization theory (SCT). SCT is a theory of the nature of the self that recognizes that perceivers are both individuals and group member, explains how and when people will define themselves as individual and group entities and its implications, and examines the impact of this variability in self-perception ('I' to 'we') for understandings of mind and behaviour. As a result, it has generated a range of distinctive subtheories, hypotheses and findings across a range of significant areas in social psychology. This chapter outlines central steps in the theory's development, its unique contribution and the impact of its ideas with specific details provided in the areas of social influence (more recently, leadership and power) and individuality (e.g. personal self, personal self-perception, personal self-beliefs). In the final section, the way SCT can be applied to better understand and solve a range of social issues is highlighted. A specific example is provided of how core SCT ideas are being implemented in secondary schools with the aim of improving school outcomes (e.g. learning, bullying, wellbeing). It is our view that through an understanding of SCT (and related work) it is possible to appreciate the important and distinctive contribution of social psychology to other areas of psychology and cognate fields.

Introduction

This chapter is focused on self-categorization theory (SCT), its development, distinctive ideas, intellectual contribution and applicability to social issues. Given that the founder of SCT (the first author of this chapter) was a cofounder of social identity theory (SIT) with Henri Tajfel, there is much that these theoretical perspectives co-contribute to understanding and debates in social psychology. To appreciate what is distinctive about SCT it is necessary to some degree to examine aspects of SIT (see also Haslam and Ellemers, Chapter 45, this volume). As far as possible, though, this chapter will focus on SCT, acknowledging where relevant overlaps and common themes. This chapter can only provide an overview of core points. There are other more detailed accounts of the beginnings and contribution of SCT (e.g. Turner, 1987a, 1996; Turner and Oakes, 1989, 1997; Turner and Reynolds, 2010; Turner et al., 1987, 1994).

The proponents of both SIT and SCT are vocal in arguing that social psychology must acknowledge the functional interdependence of mind and society in its theorizing about the nature of mental processes (Turner and Oakes, 1997). People live, work and act in a socially structured system, where there are group-based regularities of perception, cognition and conduct and this reality has psychological consequences. SIT and SCT capture the socially embedded, situated, shared, social, group-located properties of human beings. This view contrasts with other approaches that reduce the working of the mental system to general (individual) psychological properties (e.g. information processing and memory systems) or the asocial (social environment-free) nature of the individual perceiver (e.g. personality, biology).

Building on the work of Lewin, Asch, Sherif and others it is argued that human beings are both individuals and group members, that they have personal and group aspects. Both theories argue that the psychological nature of individuals (e.g. the self, mind, cognition, information processing, memory, behaviour) has to be apprehended within an understanding of groups and membership in society. SIT and SCT define the proper

and defining task of social psychology as studying and proposing theories consistent with the interplay between psychological functioning and the socially and/or culturally shared properties of human life (e.g. What does social life tell us about the mind? How does the mind make social interaction and society possible? How is the mind affected by social life?; see Turner and Oakes, 1997 for a more detailed discussion).

Theories in social psychology offer an approximation of reality that can be further investigated, elaborated and refined to provide a consistent explanation of the class of phenomena of interest. Effectiveness and parsimony typically are the dimensions on which theories are assessed. Thinking about SCT in this way the phenomena of interest is to understand, explain and predict how people come to think, feel and act as a psychological group and, importantly, the circumstances when this will occur and its consequences. Through understanding the cognitive definition of the self, *how* and *when* perceivers define themselves and others as individual and group entities, SCT explains when a group is 'a group'. The theory is at the centre of explaining the way the individual mind makes possible, and is impacted by, the fact that human beings are social animals (Turner and Oakes, 1997). SCT aims to be an effective and parsimonious theory of the self-process which contributes to explaining the functioning of the mind and behaviour.

There is a large body of work that has investigated the workings of the theory and derivations in an immense range of issues in the field (and beyond) including intergroup relations and prejudice, the nature of the group and the psychological basis of group and collective processes, social influence processes such as conformity, group polarization, minority influence, consensualization and leadership, crowd behaviour, social cooperation, group cohesion, social cognition (stereotyping, categorization), collective action and social change, the nature of the self, communication and language, and, latterly, the personal self, individuality and personality processes. In fact, many chapters in this volume engage with fundamental SCT concepts and ideas. It is also the case that implications of this theory extend beyond social psychology to psychology at large (and especially the problem of cognition) and the other social sciences (Haslam et al., 2010; Postmes and Branscombe, 2010; Reynolds et al., 2010). So how did this theory develop, why is it important and what is its impact on a range of social issues? We now turn to explore and explain the theory in more detail starting with the history of its development and then its core aspects and contribution.

SCT: Personal Narrative of its Development

In this section, the early beginnings of SCT are described. More formally, the development of the contemporary theory broadly can be summarized as involving three main steps (see also Turner and Reynolds, 2010). The first, was the distinction between personal identity and social identity and the hypothesis that it is social identity that is the basis of group behaviour. The second step, which occurred while Turner was at the Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS) at Princeton in 1982–1983, involved both an elaboration of the personal-social identity distinction to levels of self-categorization (e.g., individual, subgroup, superordinate), and the formalization of the theory (Turner, 1985). The third step, conducted mainly in the 1980s and 1990s, involved a systematic program of research on the self-concept and stereotyping. What emerged was a more detailed and integrated understanding of the nature of the self and its implications for the foundation of cognition (Oakes et al., 1994; Turner and Oakes, 1997; Turner and Onorato, 1999; Turner et al., 1994).

Social Identity and the Psychology of the Group

The story of SCT begins in 1971 when John Turner started his PhD under Henri Tajfel's supervision at the University of Bristol in the UK. Like SIT, SCT begins with the minimal group studies published in that year, in the first volume of the *European Journal of Social Psychology*. The minimal group data had shown that social categorization into groups, in isolation from and unconfounded by all the variables normally thought to cause group formation and negative intergroup attitudes (interpersonal interdependence, history of conflict), was sufficient for discrimination. Individuals assigned more of a resource to others who were in the same group as themselves (ingroup) compared to members of a group which did not include them (outgroup). Furthermore, participants acted in ways that maximized the difference in allocations between the two groups even at the expense of allocating maximum resources to the group to which they belonged. SIT was concerned with explaining why subjects discriminated in the minimal group paradigm. SCT addressed a different question: Why did subjects identify with the minimal groups at all and act in ways that reflected that these group identities mattered to them?

On Turner's arrival at Bristol in September 1971, Tajfel's explanation of the minimal group findings had progressed from there being a ‘generic norm’ of ingroup favouritism or ethnocentrism (Tajfel, 1972). In a French textbook on social categorization, Tajfel had offered a new explanation of the findings. In this chapter, Tajfel introduces and defines the concept of social identity, outlines that groups provide their members with a positive social identity and that such positivity derives through establishing a valued distinctiveness for their own groups compared with other groups. Turner's first task was to flesh out this social identity and positive ingroup distinctiveness explanation of the minimal group data. He reviewed the role of social categorization in intergroup relations and the findings of the minimal group paradigm, producing a review paper written before the end of 1971. This paper was presented by Turner at the Small Group Meeting of the European Association of Experimental Social Psychology (EAESP) on Intergroup Relations held at Bristol in February 1972. The paper, which was eventually published with additional data in 1975, showed how a systematic account of minimal and other forms of intergroup discrimination and ingroup bias (in terms of a process he called social competition), could be provided using social identity processes and not necessarily conflict of interests (e.g. Sherif, 1967).

The new analysis was summarized by Tajfel as the ‘social categorization-social identity -social comparison-positive distinctiveness’ sequence (Tajfel, 1974, 1978). The sequence provided a theoretical framework for understanding intergroup behaviour. Social categorizations defined people's place in society and through being internalized into the self, together with their emotional and value significance, provided people with social identities. Through social comparison on dimensions associated subjectively with perceivers' social values these social identities could be evaluated and provide valued positive distinctiveness for one's group (compared with other groups). The motive for positive distinctiveness could lead, under certain conditions, to ingroup favouring intergroup responses. At no time was it argued that ethnocentrism was universal or that social categorization automatically and inevitably produced ingroup bias or favouritism. If this were the case there would be no need for the development of theory to explain when such outcomes were more or less likely to define social relationships (Tajfel and Turner, 1979).

Examination of these processes was an important focus of work during the early to mid seventies at the University of Bristol. During this time, Tajfel proposed a continuum of human behaviour framed at one end by interpersonal behaviour and at the other by intergroup behaviour (Tajfel, 1978). Tajfel referred to the continuum as ‘acting in terms of self’ versus ‘acting in terms of group’. The shift along the continuum is associated with distinct forms of social behaviour. At the interpersonal end, it is expected that there should be variability in behaviour towards ingroup and outgroup members. As the social situation nears the intergroup end, though, attitudes and behaviour become more grouplike or uniform.

The continuum was important because it highlighted that group behaviour and social identity were expected only under selected conditions and motivated more work to be done specifying the social psychological conditions that lead to group rather than individual attitudes and actions. Variables such as the permeability, legitimacy and the stability of status differences between groups in a particular social system were identified as shaping whether a situation would be characterized by consensual intergroup or interpersonal behaviour. The continuum also allowed Tajfel and Turner to make a distinction between acting as an individual and acting as a group member while at the same time recognizing that people were capable of both. Work on social categorization could be further developed to specify what this meant psychologically. It was this task that became the focus of SCT.

So while Tajfel and Turner continued their work (with others) on social identity, intergroup relations and social change, that culminated in a series of influential papers (e.g. Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Turner and Brown, 1978), Turner from 1978 onwards also focused on the psychological processes that underpin movement along the behavioural continuum. At a conference in 1978 at the University of Rennes in France held by the European Laboratory of Social Psychology (LEPS) he presented a paper entitled ‘Towards a cognitive redefinition of the social group’ which explained ideas on the psychological group (Turner, 1982). Turner developed a causal analysis of the psychological process related to movement along the interpersonal–intergroup continuum. He suggested that an individual's self-concept comprised definitions of self that included both personal identity and social identity. Social identity (self-definition in terms of social category memberships) was explicitly distinguished from personal identity (self-descriptions in terms of personal and idiosyncratic attributes) and situational variations in the self-concept were recognized with the idea that social identity could function at the relative exclusion of personal identity.

Turner proposed a theory of group behaviour in terms of an ‘identity mechanism’ to explain movement along the interpersonal–intergroup continuum. He hypothesized that as people defined themselves and others as members of the same category, they would self-stereotype in relation to the category and tend to see themselves as more alike in terms of the defining attributes of the category. This process is refered to as depersonalization. It was argued that it is ‘the cognitive redefinition of the self – from unique attributes and individual differences to shared social category memberships and associated stereotypes – that mediates group behaviour’ (Turner, 1984: 528). It explains how individuals can psychologically be group members and ‘reinstates the group as a psychological reality and not merely a convenient label for describing the outcome of interpersonal processes’ (Turner, 1984: 535). This identity mechanism transforms the interpersonal–intergroup continuum into a cognitive, social psychological theory of the group (Turner, 1985, Turner et al., 1987; Turner et al., 1994).

Having applied for and received funding in 1978 for the new theory, Turner and his research group (Wetherell, Smith, Reicher, Oakes, Hogg, Colvin in roles as research assistants, PhD students or both) started applying these fundamental ideas in various areas. Initially the focus was social influence (conformity, group polarization, influence within the crowd), psychological group formation and the distinction between personal and group-based attraction (trying to show how group cohesion was a function of social identification rather than interpersonal attraction), and the problem of the salience of social categories.

Levels of Self-Categorization and Formalization of the Theory

While Turner was at IAS Princeton (1982–1983) he conceptualized further the categorization processes at work in personal identity and social identity. The focus was on the workings of self-categorization processes and the cognitive grouping of the self as being similar to some class of stimuli in contrast to some other class of stimuli. Ideas by Rosch (e.g. 1978) and others were particularly useful in thinking about processes of class inclusion and levels of inclusiveness. The personal–social identity distinction was reformulated as levels of self-categorization where people can define or categorize themselves at different levels of abstraction; for example, at the interpersonal level (where self is defined as a unique individual relative to others available for comparison), at the intergroup level (where self is defined as being a group member in contrast to a relevant outgroup), and at the superordinate level (where self is defined as a human being in contrast to other lifeforms). Self-categorizations at levels less inclusive than the individual person are also possible (e.g. intrapersonal comparisons within defining the personal self; for example, Reynolds and Turner, 2006). A central idea is that lower-order self-categories were formed *inter alia* from social comparisons within higher-order ones and higher-order ones were formed *inter alia* on the basis of lower level ones (for more detail see Turner et al., 2006).

As part of the theory's development it was necessary to address the issue of what determines which identity emerges in a given situation (e.g., personal identity or social identity and the specific content of these). It was in Oakes' PhD on the salience of social categories, that Oakes and Turner addressed this issue (Oakes, 1987). Bruner's (1957) analysis of categorization and perception was adapted to correspond to the social domain. Bruner argued that ‘all perceptual experience is necessarily the end product of a categorization process’ (1957: 124). He held a functional view of categorization where the determinants of cognitive accessibility were a function of contextual factors and the current goals, needs and purposes of the perceiver. He used the formula of ‘relative accessibility × fit’ to describe the conditions under which a stimulus was captured by a category and given meaning by the perceiver. The aim was to provide the perceiver with the information they needed to make sense of a stimulus and at the point when they needed to know it.

In this SCT work on salience, Oakes and Turner originally defined normative fit as the degree to which perceived similarities and differences between group members correlated with the social meaning of group memberships and in a direction consistent with such meaning of the group identities (e.g. it is expected that men and women differ in relation to independence and dependence and that the pattern of interaction in the given situation between men and women is consistent with men being independent and women being dependent; Oakes, 1987). Another aspect of salience was comparative fit. Defining comparative fit also was related to another project where Wetherell and

Turner, in Wetherell's PhD, were developing a social identity explanation of group polarization (Wetherell, 1987). While at Princeton, Turner was trying to provide a quantitative principle that would allow some way of explaining why groups would polarize as a function of individuals' pretest views on any issue in any given context. The aim was to predict which person or position would become prototypical (representative, or most defining of the group) and when that prototype would polarize or not. Turner succeeded with the development of the metacontrast principle (Turner, 1985; Turner and Oakes, 1986, 1989).

The principle states that a collection of individuals tend to be categorized as a group to the degree *inter alia* that the perceived differences between them are less than the perceived differences between them and other people (outgroups) in the comparative context. As an example, in a given situation men will be categorized as independent and women as dependent when the differences between women and men in relation to this dimension are greater than those amongst the men and amongst the women available for comparison. Furthermore, any specific person or position tends to be seen as more prototypical of the group as a whole to the degree that the perceived differences between that person and other ingroup members are less than the perceived differences between that person and outgroup members.

Using principles of accessibility (based on Bruner) and fit (comparative and normative) it is possible to explain which of many identities will guide perception and behaviour in any given context. The central insight is that if the meaning given to a situation (including the self) is an outcome of categorization processes that are inherently comparative, then self-categories also are infinitely variable, contextual and relative.

Revisiting the Self-Concept and Stereotyping

A direct implication of the SCT analysis is that a self-category could not be stored as a fixed, cognitive structure in some mental system before it was used waiting to be activated (as Turner along with many others had thought originally). It became clear that basic understandings of the functioning of the cognitive system (e.g. memory, perception, information processing, stereotyping) and the self-concept (e.g. core and working self) had to be revisited.

The ideas at this time were facilitated by the work of Tajfel, Bruner and Rosch, but also Medin and Barsalou who argued that categories are expressions of theories and knowledge that explain how things go together ('meaning-making'; for example, Medin and Wattenmaker, 1987) and arguments against concepts as fixed mental models (e.g. Barsalou, 1987; see Oakes et al., 1994; Turner and Reynolds, 2010). Based on SCT it is argued that the variability of self-categories is central to how the perceiver (as an individual and group member) responds in a world that also is variable and dynamic. Which group becomes salient for people, when, and its associated content or meaning, changes as a function of interactions between individuals and groups and the dynamic nature of such interactions. Shifts in self-categorization and the content of group-based judgments of oneself and others (e.g. stereotyping) reveals how self-categories are oriented to reality in which there are both individuals and groups in continuous dynamic interaction.

As an example of this point let us consider a person's stereotypes that men are independent and women are dependent. These stereotypes have to be understood within the broader intergroup relationship between men and women in society and

shared understandings of that relationship. At times this intergroup relationship and social comparison as ‘males’ compared to ‘females’ will be particularly salient shaping people's social identity and attitudes and behaviours in a given situation. It is also the case that a fixed stereotype formed and stored as ‘women are dependent’ and ‘men are independent’ will not serve the perceiver well in the face of changes in the relationship between men and women in society. To be functional for the perceiver the cognitive process needs to be able to represent new and emerging understandings of intergroup relations and be responsive to social change processes. If this were not the case the cognitive system would be impoverished and not very adaptive to its environment.

Along these lines, research conducted at this time in the theory's evolution demonstrated that stereotypes are not rigid and erroneous but reflect perceptions of group relations from the perceiver's (possibly variable) vantage point. Likewise, one's self-concept (personal and collective) is flexible and responsive to contextual stability and variability. It became clear as expected that different self-categories can become salient (e.g., myself as an individual, woman or Australian) and the content of a particular category can change as a function of the salient comparative context (Australians compared to Americans/Australians compared to Chinese) and ongoing change (e.g., the historically evolving nature of what it means to be Australian).

To summarise this phase of theoretical development, then, it is argued that the self-category is a variable judgment formed on the basis of categorization-in-context. A person brings to a situation relatively enduring knowledge about the self (personal and collective), and this information is used as a psychological resource in a given situation. This knowledge, in interaction with contextual factors, then produces a particular self-categorization and associated attitudes and behaviours. It is also the case that this knowledge (one's perceiver readiness) can be updated as a function of current self-categorizations and the accessibility of certain knowledge (and its meaning) can change as a result of the same processes.

To bring the points highlighted in the above narrative together it is possible to summarize the core theoretical developments in SCT as follows;

1 As with SIT it is argued that humans are not merely individuals and neither are our minds. Individuals, groups and intergroup relations exist. Human beings are both individuals and group members and therefore have both personal identity and social identity. Furthermore, based on SCT the psychological depersonalization of the self in terms of social identity produced ‘group behaviour’ and emergent group processes (e.g. influence, cooperation, cohesiveness). Conversely, defining oneself in terms of an idiosyncratic personal identity, in terms of individual differences from others and distinctive personal attributes, produces ‘individual behaviour’.

2 People can define or categorize themselves at different levels of abstraction. It is possible to define oneself as an individual, as a member of particular groups in contrast to others and as a member of higher-order more inclusive groups. More inclusive self-categories define what is socially negotiated and affirmed as being valued, appropriate and right. At different times in different situations we define the self in different ways and such variation in the relative salience is seen as normal and ever-present.

3 Salience explains the way a particular situation (that includes the self) is categorized and given ‘meaning’. The way the situation is categorized and

understood by the perceiver will determine both self-perception and behaviour. Salience is a function of an interaction between the perceiver's readiness to use a self-category in a given instance and the fit of that self-category to the apprehended stimulus reality.

These three ideas in combination summarize core aspects of SCT (see Turner, 1987a). We now turn to outline the way these ideas are impacting in two specific areas: social influence, which includes work on leadership and power; and individuality, which includes work on personal identity and personality processes.

SCT: Its Ideas and Intellectual History

Given the volume of work that speaks to the intellectual contribution of SCT to the field, in this section the focus will be on outlining in more detail two areas only: social influence and individuality. Social influence is an area that was a focus for initial work in SCT that has been extended to provide a new analysis of leadership and power (e.g. Turner, 1991; 2005; Turner and Haslam, 2001; Turner et al., 2008). Social influence itself is at the centre of social psychology with many significant theories in the field addressing the scientific study of how people come to influence one another affecting their attitudes, affect and actions. A more systematic consideration of personal identity, individuality and personality processes is an emerging area of inquiry (over the last 5 years or so) where the scope and relevance of SCT currently is being investigated (e.g. Reynolds and Turner, 2006; Reynolds et al., 2010; Turner et al., 2006). There is also a fundamental connection and interplay between these two areas. It is argued that it is through social identity processes and associated social influence (from others who are similar and ‘like us’) that group norms, values and beliefs can come to affect those individuals who define themselves in terms of those groups. This work, then, examines more closely the interplay between the group and the individual person.

SCT and Social Influence

To engage with the analysis of social influence offered by SCT, it is necessary to recognize the way the categorization process is understood within this theory and in particular the workings of the metacontrast principle. To reiterate, all things being equal, a collection of individuals (stimuli) tend to be categorized as a group (cognitively placed into the same class) to the degree that the perceived differences between them are less than the perceived differences between them and other people (outgroups) in the context of interest.

A number of studies have demonstrated how a psychological group emerges using these principles of categorization (see Haslam and Turner, 1992). Hogg and Turner (1987), for example, showed that when people were organized into mixed-sex groups (men and women) or same-sex groups (men-only or women-only), individuals were more likely to define themselves in terms of gender and to accentuate their similarity to those of the same gender in the mixed-sex settings as opposed to when only men or women were present (see also Oakes et al., 1991).

When people are considered to be in the same class of stimuli (‘us’ rather than ‘them’) they are cognitively grouped as similar perceivers confronting the same stimulus situation. This similarity leads people to tend to agree; it also creates an expectation that they ought to agree and respond in the same way (in reactions, judgement, attitudes, behaviour) and motivates people to bring about such agreement. In terms of

explaining more specifically how ‘others’ come to affect one's own attitudes and behaviour, the stages are summarized by Turner (1987b) as follows:

1 Individuals define themselves as members of a distinct social category.
2 They learn or develop the appropriate, expected, desirable behaviours that are correlated with category membership, and differentiate it from other categories (e.g. the stereotypical norm).
3 They assign the norms and attributes of the category to themselves (internalization) through the process of depersonalization and self-stereotyping.
4 Their behaviour therefore becomes normative as their category membership becomes more salient.

Internalization is critical to the emergent social norms having an impact on one's attitudes and behaviour (see also Kelman, 1958, 2006) and is affected by the degree to which individuals consider themselves psychologically to be members of the particular group.

Haslam et al. (1999) provide one demonstration of aspects of these processes showing that it is precisely through social identity that idiosyncratic views become socially organized and consensual. Participants were asked to reflect on their social category membership as Australians (social identity condition) or to focus on their uniqueness from others (personal identity condition) and completed a checklist identifying words typical of people from Australia before and after a group interaction phase. This manipulation of social identification did result in participants indicating that their national identity was more important to them in the social identity compared with the personal identity condition. There also was evidence that participants defined themselves in terms of the social category membership. In the social identity condition (and especially postinteraction), there was greater consensus on the attributes that defined the category of Australian, as well as the emergence of different content to describe the stereotypical attributes of the category.

Turner (1987b, 1991) also argued that subjective validity, certainty, competence, correctness and so on (e.g. what is considered factual and accurate), is a direct function of similar others in the same stimulus situation being understood to agree with one's own response. It is this point that transformed understandings of informational and normative influence into the one process of referent informational influence (Turner, 1991). Because other ingroup members are viewed as similar to oneself, they become a valid source of information and a testing ground for one's own views on relevant dimensions. Under these conditions, other group members can come to have an impact on one's own thoughts, attitudes and behaviours. It is this process of social influence that is important in explaining how others ‘like us’ play an important role in shaping the psychology of the person. Both certainty and uncertainty are related to the degree to which ‘similar others’ are perceived to agree or disagree with one's own response and are an outcome of the workings of the categorization process.

Turner (1987b, 1991) outlines a range of strategies to address situations where there is disagreement with others defined as being ‘similar’ including (a) changing our views in line with ingroup opinion, (b) attempts to influence other ingroup members to adopt a different stance through processes of mutual influence, (c) recategorization of ingroup members as being outgroup and (d) clarification of the stimulus situation (i.e. ensuring that reference is being made to the same thing; David and Turner, 1996, 1999; McGarty et al., 1994; Turner, 1991). It is argued that it is only within a shared ingroup

framework that differences in perspective (e.g. criticism, new ideas, deviance) can be resolved through discussion, clarification and mutual influence. Through these processes ingroup members can shape each others' norms, values and beliefs in significant ways (re)defining ‘who we are’ and ‘what we do’.

Much of the empirical work on these social influence processes has focused on showing not just that ingroup members are more influential than outgroup members but that the definition of who is included in the ingroup and who is excluded is a dynamic outcome of the workings of the categorization process (Haslam et al., 1992). One example of this point concerns shifts in levels of inclusiveness where hitherto subgroups are recategorised in relation to a higher-order superordinate ingroup along with associated empathy, trust, co-operation, positivity and all the other qualities that follow perceptions of self-other similarity and being ‘ingroup’. Who is included in the ‘ingroup’ and who is excluded can be redefined shifting both the ‘meaning’ of the group (its defined content and norms) and who has opportunities for influence within the group. Extremists, for example, within a group can gain or lose influence as a function of the outgroup against which the ingroup defines itself (e.g. Haslam and Turner, 1995).

In relation to the social influence process, these ideas have been demonstrated, refined and documented, in particular, in the area of minority and majority influence. In the work of David and Turner (e.g. 1996, 1999), there has been a focus on the SCT principles underlying social influence and engagement with both majority and minority influence (see also Moscovici, 1976; Turner 1991). In one of the David and Turner studies (1996, Study 1), participants (either proconservationists or prologgers) indicated their attitudes to logging prior to an influence message and immediately after the influence attempt and three weeks after the attempt. Participants were presented with a prologging or proconservation message from the ‘Friends of the Timber Industry’ or ‘Friends of the Forest’, respectively. The message was presented as representing the majority or minority position within the timber industry or conservationists. In this way, participants received an influence attempt from an ingroup majority, ingroup minority, outgroup majority or outgroup minority.

The findings revealed that when the source of the message was outgroup irrespective of whether it was majority or minority, participants shifted away from the position advocated by the source – there was not social influence. In the ingroup conditions, participants moved in the direction of the source in both the majority and minority conditions immediately following the influence attempt. In line with Moscovici (1980) the condition that revealed the most long-term shift or change was when the message was attributed to an ingroup minority source. There is additional work showing that as a hitherto outgroup is recategorized as part of a more inclusive ingroup (as a function of the frame of reference shaping the judgements of similarity and difference) it is possible for these members to exert greater influence. The implications of these results for the influence field more broadly are discussed in detail elsewhere (e.g. see David and Turner, 2001; Turner, 1991).

Additional empirical work has investigated the argument that categorization of similarities and differences between stimuli (people) not only leads to the formation of classes (ingroup and outgroup) but defines the relative prototype of the group. There is a hierarchy of relative influence that will follow the hierarchy of members' perceived relative prototypicality: where a specific person (or position) tends to be seen as more prototypical of the group when the perceived differences between the person and other

ingroup members is less than the perceived differences between that person and outgroup members. There are direct links between the influence hierarchy and notions of leadership with respect to who will be influential in a group and be able to affect others to willingly engage in certain activities and behaviours. It follows that group members will emerge as leaders (those with the most influence) to the degree that they are perceived as relatively prototypical of the group as a whole (and in ways that fit existing normative expectations with respect to leadership) and that the most prototypical person will tend to be recognized as the leader where such a role is defined.

What has flowed from this analysis of social influence is a fundamentally new understanding of leadership and power (e.g. Haslam et al., 2011; Turner, 2005; Turner and Haslam, 2001; Turner et al., 2008). Leadership within SCT is conceptualized as a group process related to relative influence and power within a group (e.g. Turner and Haslam, 2001; Haslam, 2004). The breakthrough idea is that leadership rests on an individual's ability to be seen as prototypical of a shared social identity and hence will have greater influence as a result of such categorization processes. Influence over other group members becomes possible when leaders are seen as embodying ‘who we are’ (and in ways that normatively fit expectations of ‘our’ leaders).

In line with these points, power as the ability to have impact through others also rests on group identity and influence processes (Turner, 2005). It is through social identity processes that leaders are able to get others willingly to exert their will and as such mobilize ‘followers’ to action to achieve certain ‘projects’ (including the coercion of those who are not on board). In this SCT analysis group identity and the associated willing support of followers it enables, allows groups to gain the resources they require to achieve their shared goals. These ideas are supported by a range of experimental and field studies which show that ingroup leaders (and those that are more versus less prototypical) have more potential to influence their followers, are perceived as more effective, are trusted more, and are seen as more charismatic (e.g. see Haslam, 2004; Subaŝic' et al., 2011; van Knippenberg et al., 2004).

People follow leaders because they embody ‘us’, and define what ‘we’ think is true and right, and do a better job than the rest of us of expressing what ‘we’ have in common and what we seek to achieve collectively. There also potentially are individual factors at play, but they exert influence only insofar as they are seen at any time by any given group as representing its identity better than others do. Some leaders are ‘identity entrepreneurs’ who through engaging in argumentation and political rhetoric seek to maintain their relative prototypicality and their position (e.g. Reicher and Hopkins, 2001). There is also evidence that leaders can attempt to restructure the social context or frame of reference and the definition of the group in ways that make their position more prototypical. Seeking conflict with an outgroup is one such response (e.g. Rabbie and Bekkers, 1978). The same is true when one demonizes, scapegoats and discriminates against a minority (sub)group. Prejudice against a minority can be used to reshape the mainstream identity, put one at the core, and increase one's influence (Turner, 2005; Turner et al., 2008).

Thus understanding leadership as a group process does not deny the capacity of certain leaders to make use of their insights into that process. The point is that leadership is an ability to genuinely influence and it is an outcome of group identity rather than being linked to the preordained life trajectory of any one individual (e.g.

Haslam, 2004; Reicher et al., 2005; Turner and Haslam, 2001; Turner, 1991). It is through defining the group identity that leaders are able to position themselves in ways that maximize their influence and impact on ‘what we do’. In a more general sense, though, it should be apparent that it is through the construction of definitions of ‘who we are’ and ‘who we are not’ and associated social influence that people's opinion, norms, attitudes and behaviours can become consensualized, coordinated and transformed into collective action.

SCT and Individuality

SCT's theoretical analysis of the nature of the self and self-process also has implications for understanding personal identity, individuality and personality processes. The first point is that a key contribution of the SCT is that the social comparative features that define one's social identity in a given context can also be applied to understand one's self-definition as an individual (Haslam et al., 2010; Oakes et al., 1994; Reynolds and Turner, 2006; Turner et al., 2006). A critical idea is that whether impressions, perceptions and judgements of oneself and others are group-based or individuated, depends on the levels of abstraction at which the categorization process operates (which is a function of the goals and motives of the perceiver and the elements of the situation being cognized). Rather than personal identity reflecting the relatively stable and enduring features of an individual, the nature of individuality is forged through categorization and social comparison. This argument means that one's sense of who they are as an individual can vary depending on the social comparative context.

The point to emphasise is that one's values (beliefs, norms, worldviews) are variable and socially mediated and defined by ingroup memberships and relevant social influence processes. Under certain conditions, they also become a referent through which one's distinctiveness from others can be defined and emphasized. The content that is generated to describe personal identity depends on some comparative reference and this can result in different (or the same) self-descriptors being generated depending on the context. In a sense, individual differences can be thought about theoretically in this framework as *relative* individual differences because categorization and ‘meaning’ involves comparison and contrast (Onorato and Turner, 2004; Turner and Onorato, 1999).

Examining these arguments is complex because the aim is to develop a detailed theoretical analysis of the nature of the self-process (e.g. formation, functioning, consequences, (dis)continuity), but, people bring with them their already defined experiences as individual and group members and often function in relatively stable personal and group contexts. Exploring the mechanisms or processes that might explain self-stability and self-change and its consequences in contexts where for most people there is much stability in their group and personal experiences is a challenge. There is much that can be done, though, to investigate these ideas empirically. A central theme of this work to date is to demonstrate the workings of the categorization process in relation to personal identity processes. Along these lines, Mavor, Reynolds and Skorich (2010) have investigated the impact of having people complete self-ratings in contexts where self and others are evaluated alone (intrapersonal context) or in comparison to each other (interpersonal context). At the group level there is evidence that one's own group is viewed as being more variable and heterogeneous when the group is judged alone (an intragroup context) rather than in comparison to a relevant

outgroup (an intergroup context; for example, Haslam et al., 1995). It is also the case that personal self-judgments can vary depending on features of the comparative context (e.g. intrapersonal versus interpersonal). Thus if individuals compare themselves to others (interpersonal) rather than making assessments in isolation (intrapersonal), they are more likely to characterize themselves in a dispositional way. The interpersonal context accentuates the similarities and differences between the person and comparison other, leading to a strong sense of one's self-defining features. In this way, the comparative context has an impact on personal self-categorizations, and such categorizations also can be variable depending on the frame of reference (Guimond et al., 2007).

In addition, there is a growing body of evidence showing the impact social identity processes can have on a range of outcomes often associated more with individual-level characteristics and abilities (cognitive performance, wellbeing, self-reported personality). Work on social identity or stereotype threat shows that when one's social identity is salient and the stereotype of the group on the dimension of interest is negative, this can have an impact on cognitive ability (e.g. intelligence) and performance on dimensions relevant to the meaning or stereotype of the group (Steele and Aronson, 1995). Reicher and Haslam (2006) examined the impact of group processes and social identity on a range of more clinical outcomes (e.g. depression, anxiety, paranoia). Williams et al. (2008) have research findings that show that contamination anxiety (an aspect of obsessive–compulsive disorder) is affected not only by the ethnic social category of the respondent (e.g. African American or European American), but by whether the ethnic identity is salient or not when completing the anxiety measure. Bizumic et al. (2009) show that social identity is significantly related to, and mediated the relationship between, organizational factors and individual psychological wellbeing (e.g. self-esteem, positive affect and job involvement, but also negative aspects such as depression, anxiety, loss of emotional control and aggressive and disruptive behaviour).

More specific investigations also are ongoing in relation to personality and people's self-reported sense of what characterizes and defines them as a person (e.g., self-beliefs, the Big Five). In personality theory and research, there is increasing recognition that one's social roles (e.g. daughter, worker) can impact on self-rated personality (Roberts and Donahue, 1994). The norms, expectations and meanings associated with certain roles can become internalized into the self-concept shaping a person's sense of self. An important element of this process is the impact of social interactions and the function of others' expectations, reactions and appraisals in shaping one's own beliefs about oneself (Roberts and Caspi, 2003).

It is argued that the nexus between one's roles, identity and personality could be a force for continuity through, for example, the selection of environments that are consistent with and affirm one's self view (e.g. Swann and Read, 1981). It is also possible that personality may change through exposure to new roles that provide opportunities to engage in novel behaviours. The new roles could be associated with stages of normal adult development (e.g. parenthood, joining the workforce) or actively sought as people seek to improve, develop and reframe their personhood (e.g. more like their ideal image of themselves). Roberts and Mroczek (2008) argue that the findings that personality traits continue to change across the life course highlights the need for further work on the causes and mechanisms responsible for such change.

Based on the self-categorization theory of social identity and social influence, such life-development change (and broader social changes) may well affect one's group memberships and associated social identities. As different people come to be defined as similar to oneself, they offer new opportunities for social influence and the potential for one's theories, expectations and beliefs about oneself and the world can change. The general point is that these social identity changes may well impact on personhood in significant ways (Reicher and Haslam, 2006; Reynolds et al., 2005; Reynolds and Turner, 2006; Turner et al., 2006).

In one preliminary study related to personality processes, participants complete standard personality measures at one point in time (phase 1) and also again under conditions where their non-Aboriginal Australian versus Aboriginal Australian social identity was made salient (phase 2). Results demonstrated that across time (approximately 8 weeks) there is a high level of consistency in participant-reported Neuroticism. There also was evidence of a significant impact of the social identity manipulation and one's identification as a non-Aboriginal Australian in explaining personality assessed at phase 2. Findings suggested that it was the depression subscale of the Neuroticism measure (Goldberg IPIP-NEO) that was impacted most strongly as a result of non-Aboriginal identity (Reynolds et al., 2011). It was explained that in this condition, comparisons between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal Australian may have oriented participants towards collective emotions and stereotypes that are related to what has been a negative intergroup comparison in Australia's history (see Branscombe and Doojse, 2004).

These kinds of studies are designed to investigate the SCT analysis of how self-views or self-beliefs are (re)formed and in ways the recognise social identity processes and group factors. There is evidence that categorization and social comparison affects personal identity and that social identity processes can have an impact on cognitive performance, personality and well-being in ways consistent with theory. Such findings (although preliminary) indicate that group processes may well play a role in (trans) forming personhood in particular ways. There also is more work to be done examining the role one's individuality plays in shaping the nature, functioning and success (or otherwise) of groups. All of these questions flow from the theoretical analysis of the nature of the self offered by SCT.

SCT: Its Applicability to Social Issues

As the above discussions highlight, SCT provides novel and important insights into aspects of psychological function that span intergroup relations to individual functioning. Core theoretical ideas, then, have been applied to a range of areas in psychology many of which can be readily related to current social problems and issues. More specific examples are in the areas of antiracism and prejudice reduction (e.g. Gaertner et al., 1989), the dynamics of social stability and social change (e.g. Spears et al., 2002; Subaŝić et al., 2008; Turner and Reynolds, 2003; Wright et al., 1990), the relationship between attitudes, social norms and behaviour (e.g. Goldstein et al., 2008; Terry and Hogg, 1996), organizational (group) processes such as identification, leadership, negotiation and conflict management, and working effectively with diversity (e.g. Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Haslam, 2004; Haslam et al., 2003; Hogg and Terry, 2000; Rink and Ellemers, 2007) and health and wellbeing related outcomes (e.g. Bizumic et al., 2009; Branscombe et al., 1999; Haslam et al., 2009). There is detailed work in these and other areas that outlines the specific contribution of SCT and the implications

of the approach. In the space available, one more recent project will be outlined in detail to give a flavour of the way SCT theoretical ideas (and related work) are being used both to understand and define certain social problems and implement novel solution.

Currently, social psychologists at the Australian National University are involved in a joint project with the local Department of Education concerned with applying core SCT ideas to improving school outcomes such as numeracy and literacy, attendance, challenging behaviour and staff and student wellbeing (Bizumic et al., 2009; Reynolds et al., 2007). Based on the arguments outlined above, as people come to define themselves as group members they should be more willing to internalize the norms and values of the group, act in line with these norms and be influenced by those that are most representative of the group. The aim of the project is to affect core aspects of individual functioning (learning, wellbeing, bullying/aggression) through making changes to the norms, values and beliefs that define the school as a whole (superordinate level) and relationships between groups (conflictual or cooperative) within the school environment (subgroup level). It is argued that to the degree these ‘interventions’ affect one's psychological connection to the school (school identification) and understandings of what it means to be school members (social identity content) there should be an impact on school outcome measures.

There are a number of strategies that can be implemented to affect social identity processes and to make higher-order identities more salient and thereby unify members in a common purpose and affect intergroup relations within the school setting. It is possible, for example, to (a) clarify the school's (organization's) shared mission and in essence what differentiates the school from others (i.e. what makes us ‘us’, what are ‘our’ goals), (b) restructure the way the school functions creating new structures that shape which groups and divisions are likely to become meaningful psychologically (e.g., activities structured by year group are likely to affect the salience of group memberships defined by year groups), and (c) increase the extent to which members participate and are involved in decisions that affect them, which in turn affects their identification with the group, ‘ownership’ of decisions and willingness (intrinsically) to enact them (Tyler and Blader, 2000).

Building on these points, an initial starting point in applying SCT in schools has been to build a sense of shared mission. Staff, students and interested parents and community members (as subgroups) have been involved in a process where the vision, purpose and ideal behaviours for staff and students within a particular school have been identified (e.g. Haslam et al., 2003). The collated information has been endorsed by the relevant parties and communicated to clarify the norms, values and beliefs that define the school (at school assemblies, in the classroom, on posters displayed around the school). A whole range of school activities and functions are shaped by this sense of ‘who we are’ (e.g. professional development, codifying shared practices, celebration of achievements, championing individuals who exemplify the school's mission).

In some of the schools, the aim has been to better integrate the school values with the school structure so as to promote more positive cooperative relationships between the subgroups within the school (e.g. junior and senior school, staff and students). At one school, in order to reduce the division amongst staff (across faculties) and amongst staff and students and between year groups of students, a pastoral house care system was introduced, in which other categorizations crossed through being ‘house’ members (Crisp et al., 2001). Effectively such efforts serve to reduce the fit between certain group

memberships and certain attributes and ways of functioning and introduce the possibility of other meaningful identities emerging to shape behaviour (e.g. staff do not just interact within their faculty but also across school planning).

In another school the focus has been on the classroom culture and shifting relationships, from one in which the teacher relies on coercion and extrinsic motivation to manage relationships with students and achieve learning outcomes, to one focused on leadership, influence and building intrinsic motivation (Turner, 2005). It is argued that the ability of one individual (a teacher) to get another party (a student or group of students) to willingly engage in some task or activity is a leadership process. Learning requires, at least in part, a process of social influence to emerge between the teacher and students. In order to achieve this, in the classroom the teacher is encouraged to seek to involve students in decision making about their learning and to reach shared consensus on learning goals and standards. The class is also involved in deciding on the process through which they all will achieve certain learning outcomes. As a result, it is more likely for students to 'own', feel responsible for, and be intrinsically motivated to achieve, certain outcomes and also be more likely to support each other in achieving what is now a shared collective enterprise. Many of these ideas are consistent with initiatives in the educational context (including the quality learning movement) but locating these ideas within a broader theory of psychological functioning provides a more integrated approach and serves to reinforce the importance of certain educational initiatives over others.

The impact of initiatives and interventions such as these are being assessed on a range of school outcomes using a longitudinal design across a time period of up to 4 years. Although the SCT-based interventions are in the early stages of being introduced, initial results are in line with predictions. There is evidence that social (school) identification is significantly related to, and mediates the relationship between, organizational factors and individual psychological wellbeing (Bizumic et al., 2009). Organizational factors include the degree to which staff and student support the goals and objectives of the school, endorsement of school leadership and decision-making processes, the academic emphasis within the school and the fairness and clarity of rules and consistency in their implementation. These factors often form aspects of school climate measures in the educational domain. Measures of wellbeing address positive aspects of personal functioning, such as self-esteem, positive affect and job involvement, but also negative aspects, such as depression, anxiety, loss of emotional control and aggressive and disruptive behaviour (e.g. bullying, attention seeking, victimization, spreading rumours, social exclusion). The covariation of these measures suggests that if changes are made to schools which boost one's sense of psychological connection or belonging to the group, wellbeing and challenging behaviour should also be affected.

This work and the preliminary findings are exciting for a number of reasons. First, they highlight the relevance of social psychology in addressing issues in both clinical and educational contexts (e.g. wellbeing, aggression/bullying in schools). Second, the findings reinforce the need to integrate further the role of social identity processes in understanding the (individual) psychology of the person. Third, the work speaks to the importance of recognizing all aspects of human psychological functioning (personal and social) in addressing social issues and problems. It is argued that there is added value in the definition of issues and the development of solutions that recognize that people are both individuals and group members and target the most appropriate level in

relation to the issue at hand.

Conclusion

In this chapter, core aspects of SCT have been outlined. This theory is part of a history of ideas in social psychology where there is a rejection that the person and their psychology is bound up with 'basic processes' that somehow sit apart from social experience, interaction and group life. The challenge has been to develop a model of human psychological functioning that engages with the group and society to show both how being social has affected the workings of the human mind (e.g., thoughts, emotions, memory, perception, imagination) and how the workings of the human mind make the social possible. Through a detailed analysis of the basic processes that underlie the psychological group and the cognitive definition of the self, SCT offers a non-reductionist view of the mind which has generated a range of distinctive subtheories, hypotheses and findings across a range of significant areas in social psychology. In this way the theory has demonstrated both its effectiveness and parsimony. This task has not been easy; it has been one that has involved the efforts of many and it is one that is not yet fully completed (Turner and Reynolds, 2010). It is our view that through serious engagement with the nature of the self and self-categorization process as defined in SCT it will be possible to advance social psychology and understanding of human psychology.

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- categorization
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- social influence
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